

chief items being lemon products and fish. Nearly all the export trade was with the Commonwealth, only small amounts going to New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. There is little other production. A two-monthly steam service is maintained with Sydney; other communication is irregular. The "all red" cable from Great Britain via Vancouver, Fanning Island and Fiji bifurcates at Norfolk Island, one line connecting with New Zealand, the other with Brisbane.

5. Social Condition.—Education is free and compulsory up to the age of fifteen years. The school is under the N.S.W. Department of Public Instruction, with standards corresponding to the State public schools, but the salaries and allowances of the teachers are paid by the Norfolk Island Administration. The number of scholars enrolled on the 30th June, 1918, was 147 (72 boys and 75 girls). A mission station has for many years been in existence for the education and general training of Melanesians, mostly from the Santa Cruz and Solomon Islands.

The magistrate's court has criminal jurisdiction in all crimes except capital offences, civil jurisdiction in all matters, and authority to grant probate and letters of administration.

§ 11. Lord Howe Island.

1. Area, Location, etc.—Between Norfolk Island and the Australian coast is Lord Howe Island in latitude 31° 30' south, longitude 159° 5' east. It was discovered in 1788. The total area is 3,220 acres, the island being seven miles in length and from one-half to one and three-quarter miles in width. It is distant 436 miles from Sydney, and in communication therewith by monthly steam service. The flora is varied and the vegetation luxuriant, with shady forests, principally of palms and banyans. The highest point is Mount Gower, 2,840 feet. The climate is mild and the rainfall abundant, but on account of the rocky formation only about a tenth of the surface is suitable for cultivation.

2. Settlement.—The first settlement was by a small Maori party in 1853; afterwards a colony was settled from Sydney. Constitutionally, it is a dependency of New South Wales, and is included in the King division of the Sydney electorate. A Board of Control manages the affairs of the island and supervises the palm seed industry referred to hereunder.

3. Population.—The population at the Census of 3rd April, 1911, was 56 males, 49 females—total 105.

3. Production, Trade, etc.—The principal product is the seed of the native or Kentia palm. The lands belong to the Crown. The occupants pay no rent, and are tenants on sufferance.

§ 12. Interstate Conferences.

1. General.—Reference to Interstate Conferences held in 1914 and 1915 will be found on page 1081, Official Year Book No. 8. The Conference held in 1916 is dealt with in Official Year Book No. 11, pages 1191–1193. Considerations of space preclude their insertion in the present issue.

2. Premiers' Conference, Melbourne, 1916–1917.—On 12th December, 1916, and following days, and again on 5th January, 1917, and following days, a conference of Premiers (with Ministers of Lands) was held at Melbourne. The following is a summary of the more important resolutions agreed to:—

(i) *Marriage Facilities for Absent Soldiers.* The Commonwealth Government to be asked to take into consideration the question of marriage facilities for absent soldiers.

(ii) *Preference to Soldiers.* Other things being equal, preference shall be given by the Governments to returned soldiers for any employment in their services.

(iii) *Financial Provisions for the Settlement of Returned Soldiers on the Land.* The Commonwealth agreed to make available for the calendar year 1917 a sum not exceeding £2,000,000, half the amount to be available up to 30th June, 1917.

Allocation : Queensland, £500,000 ; New South Wales, £500,000; Western Australia, £500,000 ; South Australia, £250,000 ; Victoria, £150,000 ; Tasmania, £100,000.

(iv) *The Treatment of Soldiers and Sailors and the Dependents of Soldiers and Sailors.* That it be the business of the central Commonwealth authority to devise a substantially uniform system of dealing with returned soldiers and sailors and the dependents of soldiers and sailors on service, or of soldiers and sailors who have died as a result of service in respect of—

(a) *Immediate Amelioration*, i.e., the provision of means for meeting immediate cash necessities. This, either by supplementing the military or naval pay before discharge, or by sustenance after discharge until employment or remunerative occupation can be found.

(b) *Care of the Totally Incapacitated* : To include housing where necessary.

(c) *Training of the Partially Disabled for a Useful Vocation* : To include the provision and renewal of artificial limbs and other aids.

(d) *Employment Generally*.

(e) *Assistance Towards Permanent Re-establishment* :

(1) Sustenance during the initial period of settlement on the land or establishment in other vocations.

(2) Small businesses where such deemed a desirable form of provision.

(3) Grants for tools of trade.

(4) Assistance towards house establishment—(a) loans for house building or purchase (to include the conversion of existing mortgages where terms onerous) ; (b) grants for furniture to a prescribed amount.

(f) *Care of Dependents* : (a) of men who die ; (b) of men on service.

(g) The co-ordination of governmental and private efforts for the expansion of existing, and the promotion of new industries to meet the demand for general and special employment.

(h) The assembling and administration of funds.

The States to be asked to agree to a uniform scale of advances to soldiers and sailors desiring to build or purchase dwellings in certain areas, or to convert existing mortgages of an onerous character, the Commonwealth authority to advance 25 per cent. of the value, the sum so advanced by the Commonwealth authority not to exceed £75.

The States to be asked to co-operate in the development of large national enterprises calculated to provide employment for men who cannot be otherwise placed.

On all bodies concerned with the repatriation of men under the Commonwealth scheme, the representation of soldiers and sailors who have been on active service is desirable.

3. Premiers' Conference, Sydney, 1918.—On 8th May, 1918, and following days, a Conference of Premiers was held at Sydney. The substance of the more important resolutions is given below :—

(i) *Uniform Company Law.* That it is desirable that an amended company law be introduced in each State as far as possible upon uniform lines.

(ii) *Adoption of Uniform Food Standards.* That the New South Wales Government be requested to draft a model Pure Food Act and submit it to the other States for their consideration.

(iii) *Uniform Secret Commissions Act.* That it is desirable that uniform Secret Commissions laws should be passed by the States.

- (iv) *Guarantee to Wheat Growers for 1918-19 and 1919-20.* That, subject to the Governments of the Commonwealth and of the States retaining control of the wheat scheme and of responsibility therefor, this Conference recommends that the wheat-growers of 1918-19 and 1919-20 be guaranteed 4s. 4d. per bushel, less freight from point of delivery, except in the case of New South Wales, where the arrangements already announced should be adopted; that the manner and the amounts of payment for wheat delivered and the allocation of responsibility between Commonwealth and States shall be the subject of early negotiations.
- (v) *Definition of Industrial Matters.* That this Conference affirms the desirability of defining the industrial matters which should with advantage be referred to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Federal Arbitration Court, and those that should be regarded as within the exclusive jurisdiction of the State Industrial Courts.

§ 13. Interstate Commission.

In accordance with the provisions of the Commonwealth Constitution Act (sections 101 to 104, see page 29), an Act providing for the appointment of the Commission was assented to on the 24th December 1912. The personnel of the Commission was, however, not decided until the 11th August, 1913, when Messrs. A. B. Piddington, K.C. (Chief Commissioner), Hon. George Swinburne, and N. Lockyer, C.B.E., I.S.O., were appointed. On the 8th September, 1913, a request was received from the Executive Government of the Commonwealth that the Commission should make an investigation in regard to the Tariff. This investigation was made, and in all 70 reports were issued in connection therewith. (*Vide* Official Year Book No. 9, p. 1134, and No. 10, p. 1140.)

In January, 1915, complaints were lodged with the Commission in respect to contravention of the provisions of the Constitution relating to trade and commerce. In this connection, the case of the Commonwealth of Australia *v* The State of New South Wales and another was subsequently heard before the Commission, but on an appeal to the High Court against its decision it was held that under section 101 of the Constitution the Interstate Commission had not been given judicial powers. It has been announced that the Government proposes to introduce legislation to confer judicial powers on the Interstate Commission.

On the 14th September, 1915, the Minister for Trade and Customs requested the Commission to furnish for the information of Parliament a report as to the new industries which, in its opinion, could with advantage be established in the Commonwealth, and in pursuance of this request such report was prepared and presented.

On the 7th March, 1916, the Commission was entrusted with an enquiry into the subject of British and Australian trade in the South Pacific, with the result that a report was furnished which deals with all factors affecting the progress of the island possessions in which Great Britain and Australia are interested.

On the 19th April, 1916, the Commission was invited by the Postmaster-General, on behalf of the Commonwealth and the several States, to act as arbitrator on the question of charges, etc., by the Railway Commissioners of the States for the carriage of mails. Subsequently sittings were held in this matter and decisions and awards made.

On the 9th August, 1917, the Prime Minister, as the result of complaints made to him, requested the Commission to inquire into the causes of increased prices of food, clothing, house rent, etc. This inquiry is now completed. In connection with this investigation a regulation under the War Precautions Act was passed to permit each Commissioner to sit alone, and while so sitting to exercise all the powers of investigation conferred by the Interstate Commission Act of 1912.

There is at present a vacancy on the Commission, the Hon. George Swinburne having resigned his position thereon.